



THE DECLINE IN ARIZONA JUVENILE CRIME

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to official reports, juvenile crime in Arizona has declined. In fact, the number of juvenile arrests has declined by 27.5%, and the percentage of crimes cleared by the arrest of a juvenile has also declined. The decline in juvenile crime was greater in Arizona than it was nationally, or in other western states. Director Michael Branham asked the Research and Development Division to examine the decline and research why it has occurred. In addition, Representative John Huppenthal of the Arizona House of Representatives and Mr. Richard Stavneak, of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee requested research on how charter school enrollments may have contributed to the decline. The purpose of this report is to present the results of a study designed to gain a better understanding of the recent decline in Arizona juvenile crime.

Nine of the eleven Arizona justice agencies who participated in our survey believed that juvenile crime has declined in their communities. They credited a range of programs with contributing to the decline, and the programs included such things as the transfer of violent and serious juvenile offenders to adult court through gang, school and family-based interventions. Charter school enrollments increased by 77.4% between 1999 and 2003. Statistical analyses of charter school enrollment and juvenile crime data revealed contradictory results: there is a strong negative association between enrollments and juvenile crime at the state level, but when examined at the county level, we found a positive association between enrollments and juvenile crime for most (12) Arizona counties. The negative association at the state level can be attributed, in part, to the large, negative, but insignificant associations between charter school enrollments and juvenile crime in Maricopa and Pima counties.

While the decline in juvenile crime should be cause for celebration, additional research should be conducted to better isolate the factors responsible for the decline. This research should be conducted at a local level because that will limit the number of factors at play, and also help identify programs which could be replicated in the Arizona communities that have not experienced declines in juvenile crime. This report is organized into the following four sections: Background, Methodology, Findings and Conclusions.

BACKGROUND

According to official reports, juvenile crime in Arizona is declining. Is it really declining, and if it is, what could be causing the decline? These are important questions to ask in 2004 insofar as there was a great deal of attention devoted to Arizona juvenile crime in the mid-1990s, and it would be useful to know if the programs implemented at that time had their desired effect. The primary source of information on Arizona juvenile crime is *Crime in Arizona*, published by the Arizona Department of Public Safety and *Juveniles Processed in the Arizona Court System (Juveniles Processed)* published by the Arizona Supreme Court, Juvenile Justice Services Division. *Crime in Arizona* contains law enforcement data from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program. *Juveniles Processed* contains referral, petition and disposition data from the prosecutorial and judicial branches of government. UCR reported crime data are the most frequently cited source of information on Arizona crime trends. Offender age is unavailable¹ for reported crime, so the number of juveniles committing crimes in Arizona can only be estimated by referring to the number of juveniles arrested, or by referring to the percentage of crimes cleared because of a juvenile arrest. As displayed in Tables 1, 2 and 3, the percentage of Arizona total crimes, as well as the percent of violent and property crimes cleared by juvenile arrest have declined. As shown in Table 4, juvenile arrests declined by 27.5% between 1996 and 2003. Table 4 also shows that referrals² declined, and while the number of juvenile petitions³ increased through 2000, they declined afterwards. Table 5 displays a comparison among Arizona, western states and national juvenile arrests, and it

1 The new National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) will correct this shortcoming.

2 A referral is a report submitted to a Juvenile Court alleging that a youth committed a delinquent act or demonstrated incorrigible behavior.

3 Petitions represent charges brought against juveniles within the Juvenile Court.

shows that the decline in Arizona juvenile arrests (-25.5%) was greater than the decline among western states (-22.2%) and all states (-19.8%).

Table 1

CRIME⁴			
	REPORTED CRIME	CLEARANCES	CLEARANCES INVOLVING JUVENILES
1996	310,757	59,532	23.8%
1997	316,490	56,887	23.7%
1998	300,910	54,861	22%
1999	278,804	49,559	21.7%
2000	299,823	47,975	21.4%
2001	320,836	48,529	20.1%
2002	344,181	41,517	20.5%
2003	338,975	53,667	17.8%

Table 2

VIOLENT CRIME⁵			
	REPORTED CRIME	CLEARANCES	CLEARANCES INVOLVING JUVENILES
1996	27,626	11,299	15.8%
1997	27,429	11,314	16.8%
1998	26,281	10,384	16.5%
1999	25,835	10,247	15.4%
2000	27,187	10,603	14.4%
2001	28,373	10,586	15.0%
2002	29,782	11,472	13.2%
2003	28,198	11,534	12.5%

4 Source: Crime in Arizona

5 Source: Crime in Arizona

Table 3

PROPERTY CRIME⁶			
	REPORTED CRIME	CLEARANCES	CLEARANCES INVOLVING JUVENILES
1996	283,131	48,233	25.6%
1997	289,061	45,573	25.4%
1998	274,629	44,477	23.3%
1999	252,969	39,312	23.4%
2000	272,636	37,372	23.4%
2001	292,463	37,943	21.6%
2002	314,399	41,517	20.5%
2003	310,777	42,143	19.3%

Table 4

	JUVENILE ARRESTS⁷	JUVENILE REFERRALS⁸	JUVENILE PETITIONS⁹
1996¹⁰	73,046	50,820	16,384
1997	69,493	50,210	17,733
1998	64,419	51,009	18,496
1999	58,688	48,246	18,186
2000	58,807	48,534	20,204
2001	53,850	51,274	19,983
2002	52,373	50,399	19,036
2003	52,941	49,588	17,903

6 Source: Crime in Arizona

7 Source: Crime in Arizona

8 Source: Juveniles Processed

9 Source: Juveniles Processed

10 Referral and petition data are for the respective fiscal years of July through June.

Table 5

JUVENILE ARRESTS BY JURISDICTION AND YEAR¹¹			
	ARIZONA	WESTERN STATES	UNITED STATES
1996	68,974	558,927	2,103,658
1997	63,287	564,882	1,969,407
1998	60,072	571,531	1,986,553
1999	56,492	518,452	1,720,169
2000	52,674	510,724	1,751,752
2001	51,894	498,666	1,685,675
2002	50,583	473,008	1,747,175
2003	51,400	434,982	1,687,482

Table 6

COURT DISPOSITION BY FISCAL YEAR AND TYPE				
	STANDARD PROBATION	INTENSIVE PROBATION	ADJC COMMITS	ADULT COURT
1996	8,197	2,154	952	663
1997	8,989	2,408	1,136	712
1998	9,436	2,718	1,134	1,083
1999	9,199	2,572	1,005	883
2000	10,830	2,552	987	762
2001	11,039	2,549	893	668
2002	10,870	2,512	823	575
2003	10,244	2,432	752	567
2004	unavailable	unavailable	688	unavailable

The decline in Arizona juvenile crime is apparent in court disposition data. Table 6 shows various dispositions for juveniles adjudicated delinquent or sent to adult Superior Court.

As can be seen, the number of juveniles placed on standard probation peaked in 2001 and has declined the last two years. The number of Juveniles placed on intensive probation peaked in 1998, and has declined since then. Commitments to the Arizona Department of

¹¹ Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States, the reason for the discrepancy in Arizona juvenile arrest numbers displayed in Tables 4 and 5 is that the FBI has an earlier deadline to submit data for the UCR than does DPS for their own reports. In other words, the DPS data is more inclusive and up-to-date than what is represented in the UCR

Juvenile Corrections (ADJC) peaked in 1997 and have declined. Finally, juveniles sent to adult court as transfers or direct files peaked in 1998, and also have declined.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the decline in Arizona juvenile crime by contacting selected police, probation and prosecutors offices in Arizona, and also to review charter school enrollments. When contacting the jurisdictions we sought to confirm the apparent decline in juvenile crime and to identify possible reasons for the decline. In addition, we examined the trend in charter school enrollments to ascertain if there was an association between juvenile crime trends and enrollments.

To obtain more information on juvenile arrests, we started with the three Arizona counties that provide most of the commitments to ADJC, that also had declines in juvenile arrests. The three counties were Maricopa, Pima and Yavapai. Using a standard questionnaire we contacted the Chiefs of Police in the largest 11 police departments in these three counties. We told the Chief's office of the purpose of our study, and we asked them to direct us to the appropriate party who could best answer our questions. Eight of the eleven departments provided us with information for our study.

To obtain more information on referrals, we started with the four Arizona counties that provide most of the commitments to ADJC that also had decreases in referrals. The four counties were Maricopa, Pima, Coconino and Pinal. Using a standard questionnaire, we contacted the Chief Juvenile Probation Officers within each of the four counties. We advised the Chief's office of the purpose of our study and asked them to direct us to the

appropriate party who could best answer our questions. We have received information back from two of the four Arizona counties.

To obtain more information on juvenile petitions, we started with the two Arizona counties that provide most of the commitments to ADJC that also had decreases in petitions. The two counties were Maricopa and Pima. Using a standard questionnaire, we contacted the Chief Juvenile Prosecutor. We advised the Chief's office of the purpose of our study and asked them to direct us to the appropriate party within their department who could best answer our questions. We have received information back from one of the counties.

To obtain information on charter school enrollments we contacted Mr. Lee McIlroy, Research Analyst with the Arizona Charter School Board. Mr. McIlroy directed us to the Arizona Department of Education internet website where we located charter school enrollment data for 1999 through 2004. Mr. McIlroy also told us that no reliable data is available on Arizona charter school enrollments prior to 1999.

Law Enforcement Findings

The police departments provided us with information which confirmed the decline in juvenile crime and attributed the decline to various programs that have been implemented since 1997. Six of the police departments told us that their arrest data corroborated the UCR data showing declines in juvenile arrests. Two other police departments provided data different than what was originally reported in *Crime in Arizona*, and the new data showed increases in juvenile arrests in their jurisdictions. Differences between the two

arrest data bases were not examined in this study, but are most likely the result of the timing of their respective reports and/or definitional differences.

Many of the police departments reported new programs which they said probably contributed to the decline in juvenile crime. Tucson reported a greater emphasis upon schools and truancy. In addition, Tucson attributed the decline to police and community-based efforts to reach at-risk youth at a young age. They mentioned School Resource Officers in middle and elementary schools as examples of this effort. Mesa identified a new program for juvenile status offenders and a *Families in Need* program that they felt reduced the number of juvenile arrests. Mesa Police Department attributed the decline in juvenile crime to their efforts to intercede in junior high schools where they address disciplinary problems. Mesa also told us that the addition of three new *Positive Alternatives to Gangs Advocates* meant that they were impacting more at-risk juveniles. Glendale, meanwhile, noted that a sweep of gang members in 2002 helped reduce juvenile crime in their area. Phoenix and Peoria reported that curfew violations were not being enforced as they were previously. Cottonwood identified a new school-based program which has helped reduce juvenile crime. Glendale attributed the decline in juvenile crime to their efforts of holding gang members accountable. Peoria attributed the decline to two factors: a new person in charge of juvenile detention who has instituted an education initiative on discipline, and greater interaction between the Peoria Police Department and local charter schools. Phoenix Police Department felt that without a proper research design it was impossible to determine the cause for the decrease. None of

the police departments were aware of any other studies done on juvenile crime in Arizona.

Probation Findings

The probation departments that provided us with information confirmed the decline in referrals, however, they were unable to attribute the decline to specific juvenile policies or programs. Coconino County Probation reported that the decline in juvenile referrals was part of an overall reduction in referrals and petitions to juvenile court. Neither of the probation departments were aware of any other studies done on juvenile crime in Arizona.

Prosecutor Findings

The Pima County Attorney's Office confirmed the decline in petitions reported in *Juveniles Processed*, but said that it was smaller than they had hoped-for. The Pima County Attorney's Office identified six policies and programs that contributed to the decline. First, when Proposition 102 and Senate Bill (SB) 1446 were implemented in 1997, they resulted in violent and chronic juvenile offenders having charges filed in adult rather than juvenile court. Second, placing violent and chronic juveniles in the adult system freed resources to be used for the remaining cases in the juvenile justice system enhancing the likelihood that they would desist from offending. Third, the School Multi-Agency Response Team (SMART) program resulted in a decline in school-related drug offenses. Fourth, Pima County instituted a program in 1997 whereby prosecutors were assigned to specific regions which allowed them to become familiar with the respective schools and neighborhoods and thereby select the most appropriate dispositions for

juvenile offenders. Fifth, Community Justice Boards were cited as aids to reducing the number of juvenile petitions. Finally, Pima County engaged in community-based prosecution by encouraging their prosecutors to appear in school classrooms and to interact with community service groups on juvenile crime issues. The Pima County Prosecutor also reported efforts to hold juveniles more accountable for their actions, stepped-up efforts to educate school and police officials on what constituted a crime, and an increase in the education of Pima County prosecutors themselves on what cases could be diverted from the juvenile justice system. They were unaware of any other studies done on juvenile crime in Arizona.

Charter School Findings

Table 7

TOTAL CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY JURISDICTION				
	STATE OF ARIZONA	MARICOPA COUNTY	PIMA COUNTY	REMAINING COUNTIES
1999	46,000	29,396	4,554	9,650
2000	55,586	36,601	6,197	12,788
2001	65,769	42,007	8,624	15,138
2002	75,135	47,587	10,160	17,388
2003	81,612	51,993	11,943	17,670

Table 8

TOTAL CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY JURISDICTION				
	STATE OF ARIZONA	MARICOPA COUNTY	PIMA COUNTY	REMAINING COUNTIES
2000	16,453	9,681	2,924	3,848
2001	21,009	12,563	3,376	5,070
2002	24,621	15,261	3,978	5,382
2003	27,769	16,741	4,976	6,052
2004	30,534	18,644	5,681	6,209

Enrollment in Arizona charter schools increased by 77.4% between 1999 and 2003 (see Table 7). There was an especially large increase in Pima County (162%). Enrollment in

Arizona charter high schools increased by 85.6% between 2000 and 2004 (see Table 8). Both Pima (94.3%) and Maricopa (92.6%) counties posted large increases.

Statistical analyses of charter school enrollment and juvenile crime data revealed a strong negative association between enrollments and juvenile crime at the state level, but insignificant results at the county level. A correlational analysis was conducted using total charter school and charter high school enrollments as the independent variables and seven different measures of juvenile crime as the dependent variables: clearances involving juveniles, violent crime clearances involving juveniles, property crime clearances involving juveniles, juvenile arrests, juvenile referrals, juvenile petitions and juveniles sent to adult Superior Court. The analysis encompassed statewide Arizona data for 1999 through 2003. The analysis revealed a large, statistically significant ($p \leq .05$) negative association between total charter school or charter high school enrollments and various measures of juvenile crime. The coefficients ranged from a low of $-.85$ ($p \leq .05$) between total charter school enrollment and clearances involving juveniles to a high of $-.99$ ($p \leq .001$) between charter high school enrollments and juveniles sent to adult Superior Court. While our analysis was not designed to identify causal relationships, our analysis did find at the state level, that as charter school enrollments increased, juvenile crime decreased. This finding should be regarded cautiously, however, due to other findings we obtained. A second correlation analysis was conducted whereby we disaggregated total charter school and charter high school enrollments and juvenile arrests by Arizona county. This analysis revealed large negative, but not statistically significant associations between total charter school or charter high school enrollments and juvenile arrests in

Maricopa and Pima counties. The negative association that we found at the state level can be attributed, in part, to the large, negative associations between charter school enrollments and juvenile crime in Maricopa and Pima counties. Indeed, 78% of the charter school enrollments in 2003 were in Maricopa and Pima Counties. Before one concludes that charter school enrollment is related to juvenile crime reduction you must first take address the anomaly presented by the other Arizona counties. Indeed, our analysis revealed a positive association between charter school enrollments and juvenile arrests in 12 of the 14 counties we examined.

Table 9

ADJC COMMITMENTS BY CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND CALENDAR YEAR			
	ADJC COMMITMENTS	NUMBER ENROLLED IN A CHARTER SCHOOL	PER CENT ENROLLED IN A CHARTER SCHOOL
2000	956	167	17.5%
2001	800	153	19.1%
2002	832	189	22.7%
2003	748	184	24.6%

The percentage of juveniles who attended charter schools prior to their commitment to ADJC has increased. The increase in ADJC commitments from charter schools is consistent with the statewide growth in charter school enrollments. As shown in Table 9, the percentage of juveniles attending charter schools increased from 17.5% in 2000 to 24.6% in 2003. ADJC commitments from Maricopa County charter schools posted a 42.5% increase between 2000 (80) and 2003 (114).

CONCLUSIONS

Nine of the eleven Arizona justice officials we contacted during our study believed that juvenile crime has, in fact, declined in their jurisdictions. This is good news for Arizona. The officials we contacted credited a range of programs with contributing to the decline in juvenile crime. The programs ranged from sending violent and serious juvenile offenders to adult court through gang, school and family-based interventions. The strong negative association between statewide charter school enrollments and juvenile crime indicate that this factor may be a potential contributor to the decline in Arizona juvenile crime for Maricopa and Pima Counties. The apparent contradiction between the results for Maricopa and Pima and the other 12 counties when the county-by-county correlation analysis was done shows, if anything, that the negative association that exists for the aforementioned two counties and also for the aggregate data need to be viewed with extreme suspicion. An examination of the relative importance of the various factors associated with the decline of Arizona juvenile crime was beyond the scope of this project. Data collection to conduct this endeavor at the state level would be a formidable task. Research conducted at a local level might be the most prudent approach to measuring the contribution each factor had on the decline in juvenile crime. This type of evaluation research is vital to determining which programs have scientific support, and this research could prove helpful to deciding which programs should be replicated in the Arizona communities that have not experienced declines in juvenile crime.